

Message Text

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PAGE 01 GEORGE 01217 081925Z
ACTION ARA-14

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C O N F I D E N T I A L GEORGETOWN 1217

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: GY, CY, XM
SUBJECT: GUYANESE EXPRESSION OF CONCERN OVER CUBAN ACTIVITIES
IN THE CARIBBEAN

REF: (A) GEORGETOWN 893, (B) GEORGETOWN 923

SUMMARY: FONMIN WILLS HAS BROUGHT UP AGAIN THE THEME THAT THE
US SHOULD CONSIDER THE CARIBBEAN AS AN AREA OF SPECIAL
RESPONSIBILITY, AND HE EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER CUBAN EFFORTS TO
EXTEND THEIR INFLUENCE IN THE AREA, PARTICULARLY IN THE SMALL
DEPENDENT STATES AND BELIZE. THIS TIME HE SAID THAT THE VENE-
ZUELANS WERE ALSO ATTEMPTING TO DO THE SAME, BUT GUYANA DID NOT
FIND THE PROSPECT OF INCREASED VENEZUELAN INFLUENCE IN THE AREA
CONFORTING EITHER, PRIMARILY BECAUSE OF THE IMPLICATIONS THIS
MIGHT HAVE FOR THE GUYANA-VENEZUELAN TERRITORIAL DISPUTE.
WILLS EXPRESSED THE BELIEF THAT THE US SHOULD ACT IN A POSITIVE
WAY TO PREEMPT THE CUBAN THRUST. HE ALSO SAID THAT PRIME
MINISTER BURNHAM WAS CONSIDERING A PROPOSAL THAT GUYANA
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PAGE 02 GEORGE 01217 081925Z

CLARIFY ITS POSITION ON PUERTO RICO IN A WAY THE US WOULD
REGARD AS POSITIVE. WILLS' COMMENTS APPEAR TO REFLECT A
SHIFT THAT IS TAKING PLACE IN THE THINKING OF GUYANESE LEADERS,
BUT -- EVEN THOUGH SUCH A REORIENTATION IS IN PROCESS --
MUST BE TAKEN WITH CAUTION AS WILLS IS ALSO TRYING TO CONVINCE
THE US OF GUYANA'S RELIABILITY, AND SECONDLY THE PRIME MINIS-
TER MAY NOT BE FULLY IN ACCORD WITH THIS LINE OF THINKING

CONCERNING THE CUBAN "THREAT." END SUMMARY.

1. DURING A MEETING IN HIS OFFICE JUNE 4, WILLS COMMENTED ON CUBA'S ACTIVITIES IN THE CARIBBEAN AND AN INITIATIVE HE SAID HE HAD PROPOSED TO BURNHAM CONCERNING PUERTO RICO.

2. WILLS TOLD ME THAT HE AND GUYANA'S PERMREP AT UN, RASHLEIGH JACKSON, HAD RECOMMENDED IN WRITING TO BURNHAM THAT IN THE NEAR FUTURE JACKSON SHOULD MAKE CLEAR IN A PUBLIC STATEMENT THAT GUYANA DID NOT ASSOCIATE ITSELF WITH CUBAN EFFORTS CONCERNING PUERTO RICO. THE RATIONALE GIVEN WOULD BE THAT THE PUERTO RICAN PEOPLE HAD MADE THEIR WISHES KNOWN IN THE ELECTIONS LAST NOVEMBER.

3. WILLS THEN REFERRED, AS HE HAD IN THE PAST (REFTELS), TO THE POLITICAL VACUUM THAT HE BELIEVES IS DEVELOPING IN THE CARIBBEAN. CUBA AND VENEZUELA WERE ATTEMPTING TO MOVE INTO IT. CASTRO'S AGENTS WERE EXTREMELY ACTIVE IN DOMINICA, ST. KITTS AND ST. LUCIA. WILLS ALSO REFERRED AGAIN TO THE BELIZE PROBLEM AND CUBAN ACTIVITIES IN CONNECTION WITH IT. HE ALSO SAID THE CUBANS ALSO HOPED TO USE MANLEY AS A STALKING HORSE, BUT THAT DID NOT SEEM TO BE WORKING OUT.

4. THE VENEZUELANS WERE NOT AN ADEQUATE ALTERNATIVE TO THE CUBANS BECAUSE IF VENEZUELA INCREASED ITS STRENGTH AND INFLUENCE IN THE CARIBBEAN IT WOULD MORE EASILY TRY TO ASSERT ITS CLAIM OVER GUYANESE TERRITORY.

5. WILLS LAMENTED WHAT HE SAID WAS A "SEEMING LACK OF CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 GEORGE 01217 081925Z

RESPONSE BY THE UNITED STATES TO THESE (CUBAN) INCURSIONS." HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE FAILURE OF THE US TO ASSERT ITS INFLUENCE WOULD NARROW THE OPTIONS OF COUNTRIES LIKE GUYANA. WHY WAS IT, HE SAID, THAT EXCEPT IN SUCH CASES AS THE INITIATIVES MADE TO THE SOVIET UNION AND CHINA THAT US FOREIGN POLICY SEEMED TO A DAMAGE-LIMITING OPERATION. THE US WOULD PAY ATTENTION TO AND PROVIDE LARGE-SCALE ASSISTANCE TO COUNTRIES AFTER A SITUATION GETS OUT OF CONTROL, SUCH AS THE SITUATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. IN THE CARIBBEAN, ON THE US' DOORSTEP, THE US SEEMED OBLIVIOUS TO THE PROBLEM OF CUBAN AND SOVIET INFLUENCE.

6. I RESPONDED THAT I WAS VERY GLAD TO HEAR HIM TALKING IN THIS FASHION. THEN I REMINDED HIM OF US EXPERIENCES THROUGHOUT THE PAST 15 YEARS. I SAID THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION WAS BUILDING A NEW BASIS FOR POLICY, NOT ONLY IN THE CARIBBEAN BUT ELSEWHERE. THIS NEW POLICY BASED ON NON-INTERVENTION, RESPECT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND SELF INTEREST COULD HELP IN DEVELOPMENT AND IN STRENGTHENING

THE STABILITY OF THE CARIBBEAN. WE WERE NOT GOING TO BE PARANOIC, HOWEVER, ABOUT THE CUBANS OR THE RUSSIANS. I ALSO REMINDED HIM THAT GUYANA'S PAST ATTITUDES HAD NOT BEEN CONDUCIVE TO THE KIND OF INITIATIVES THAT HE NOW IMPLIED THAT THE US SHOULD TAKE.

7. WILLS SAID THAT MUCH OF THE CRITICISM OF THE US IN THE PAST PARTICULARLY FROM THE CARIBBEAN AREA RESULTED BECAUSE THE AREA'S LEADERS FELT THEY WERE BEING LEFT OUT OF INTERNATIONAL DECISION-MAKING. THEIR VIEWS AND PROBLEMS HAD NOT BEEN CONSIDERED WHEN LARGER NATIONS HAD MADE DECISIONS AFFECTING THEM. HE THEN SAID "ALL WE ARE ASKING FOR IS MORE CONSULTATION AND INFLUENCE IN SHAPING DECISIONS AFFECTING US."

8. COMMENT: WILLS HAS NOW RAISED SEVERAL TIMES THE ISSUE OF WHAT HE CALLS THE GROWING VACUUM IN THE CARIBBEAN DUE TO CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 GEORGE 01217 081925Z

THE PHASE-OUT OF BRITISH INFLUENCE AND THE GROWTH OF CUBAN AND, DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, SOVIET INFLUENCE. DURING OUR MEETING JUNE 4, HOWEVER, HE WAS MUCH MORE EXPLICIT IN SAYING THAT THE US SHOULD EXERT ITS INFLUENCE IN THE AREA. HIS SPECIAL EMPHASIS AT THIS TIME COULD BE GENUINE OR IT COULD BE PART OF HIS EFFORTS TO GAIN US FAVOR AND ATTENTION TO GUYANA'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. WILLS IS ACTING TO CULTIVATE CLOSER RELATIONS WITH THE US, BUT THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE GOG IS WILLING TO CHANGE SOME OF ITS OTHER POLICIES TO ACHIEVE THIS REMAINS UNCERTAIN. ALSO, ALTHOUGH WILLS INTIMATED THAT BURNHAM SHARES THIS CONCERN ABOUT THE CUBANS, HE DID NOT SAY SO DIRECTLY. HE IS NOT ABOVE CONVEYING A MORE POSITIVE PICTURE THAN OVERALL CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD WARRANT.

9. CONCERNING PUERTO RICO, WILLS REMAINS ADAMANT THAT HIS DELEGATION AT THE NACC FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING IN NEW DELHI DID NOT ACTIVELY SUPPORT THE CUBAN POSITION AND THAT IT WORKED TO WATER DOWN CUBAN INITIATIVES DURING DRAFTING SESSIONS. I HAD ALSO DISCUSSED THIS WITH AMBASSADOR MANN WHILE HE WAS HERE AND HE TOO INSISTED THAT GUYANA BEHAVED AS WILLS HAD SAID AT NEW DELHI. NEVERTHELESS, I TOLD THEM IMPRESSION LEFT AT NEW DELHI WAS THAT THE GUYANA DELEGATION COOPERATED CLOSELY WITH THE CUBANS. WILLS APPARENTLY REMAINS SENSITIVE ABOUT THIS AND IS ATTEMPTING TO IMPRESS UPON US THAT GUYANA IS NOT WITH CUBA ON THE PUERTO RICO ISSUE.
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Disposition Approved on Date:
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Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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